



## The Prescription for What Ails a Forest



**DURANGO** - This fall has been busy for prescribed burning on the San Juan NF to round out a full year of work across all three districts to create more resilient forests, reduce wildfire danger and improve wild-life habitat.

The Columbine RD accomplished 6,000 acres of prescribed burning in the Pargin Mountain area last month. Firefighters blacklined and patrolled the 19-mile perimeter, while a helicopter was used to ignite the interior.

This winter, Columbine crews will be burning slash piles resulting from earlier mechanical and hand-thinning operations in the Sauls Creek, Yellow Jacket and Fossett Gulch areas.

The Pagosa RD conducted prescribed burning this fall on almost 900 acres in the Turkey Springs area. Earlier in the year, crews burned slash piles on about 300 acres of National Forest treated earlier by mechanical and hand-thinning operations.

The Dolores RD conducted hand ignitions on about 200 acres this fall in the Doe Canyon area and plans to burn another 150 acres

soon. Also planned for this fall are two other prescribed burns, pending favorable weather conditions. Ground crews hope to ignite about 1,300 acres in the South Carver Canyon area, and aerial ignition is planned for 1,500 acres at Trimble Point.

Last winter Dolores crews were able to burn 23 large slash piles on 60 acres in the Chicken Creek area and 600 smaller piles on 60 acres in the McPhee Park area.

We want to sincerely thank everyone for their patience with the resulting smoke. We are encouraged with the support our prescribed fire program has been receiving.

“Smoke can be inconvenient, but by applying prescribed fire at times when it can be controlled, land managers are helping to make our communities safer from wildfires, which could result in loss of homes and the destruction of natural resources,” said Aaron Kimple, Program Coordinator for the nonprofit San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership.

- Ann Bond



# SAN JUAN PUBLIC LANDS CENTER

## Welcome, Russ

**DURANGO** - San Juan NF Supervisor Kara Chadwick is gone for four months on a special assignment to Atlanta, Georgia, as Acting Deputy Regional Forester for Natural Resources in the USFS Southeast Region.

In her absence, Russ Bacon, Deputy Forest Supervisor for the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison (GMUG) NFs since 2013, is serving as the San Juan's Acting Forest Supervisor.

Russ was born in Boise, Idaho, and his grandfather and father both had long USFS careers. He spent his first 12 years in USFS compounds in Idaho and Wyoming.

Russ held several USFS seasonal jobs in college and graduated from the University of Idaho with a Bachelors degree in Forest Resources Management in 1997. He started his federal career in 1995 as a timber seasonal on the Boise NF Idaho City RD and got his first permanent job on the Black Hills NF Hell Canyon RD in 1999 as a marking crew foreman, GIS specialist and fire restoration coordinator.

Russ went on to be Assistant District Ranger on the Huron-Manistee NF, District Ranger on the Bridger-Teton NF Kemmerer RD, and District Ranger on the Salmon-Challis NF North Fork RD, before landing in his current position on the GMUG. He and wife, Darcie, a former USFS botanist, have two children; daughter, Cheyenne, who lives and works in Golden, and son, Ethan, an 8<sup>th</sup> grader.

"I'm really enjoying meeting the employees on the San Juan," Russ says. "The forest is doing amazing work, and I look forward to helping us continue to accomplish great things over the next few months." - Ann Bond



Russ Bacon, wife Darcie, son Ethan

## Engineering Update

**DURANGO** - Mark Lambert is now Acting San Juan NF Staff Officer for Engineering and Minerals, while continuing in his position as Staff Officer for Planning and Public Service.

Until the end of the calendar year, Ben Martinez will continue in his role as USFS On-Scene Coordinator for the Bonita Peak Mining District Superfund Project.

Mark says engineering staff is busy this fall keeping forest roads up to standard and completing a number of projects.

This includes completing design work for improvements at Chimney Rock National Monument, which is getting a new entry portal sign, parking lot, and interpretive facilities. These are scheduled for construction beginning next year.

- Ann Bond



**REMINDER:**  
All who use pool vehicles  
must follow the San Juan  
Fleet Appearance  
and Maintenance Standards:

- Vehicles should be washed to maintain cleanliness and appearance of exterior, as needed.
- Trash and debris should be removed from the interior and/or pickup bed.
- Operators should perform pre-trip inspections and report any needed repairs.
- Operators should check tires, oil, brakes, headlights, etc.
- No tobacco products may be used in federal vehicles.
- Radios and cell phones are not to be used while driving.



# SAN JUAN PUBLIC LANDS CENTER

## On the Radio

**DURANGO** - Steven Cooper is the San Juan's new Electronics Technician overseeing mobile radio operations. He previously worked on the Forest as an Airtanker Base Technician at the Durango Airtanker Base and as a Timber Stand Improvement Forestry Technician on the Dolores RD.

From 2007 to 2011, Stephen was an Airfield Systems Technician for the U.S. Air Force 34<sup>th</sup> Combat Communications Squadron and Combat Communications Technician for the 1<sup>st</sup> Combat Communications Group.

Stephen studied Electronic Systems Technology at Community College of the Air Force and Environmental Studies at Fort Lewis College. He and wife, Margaret, have two dogs, Charlie and Leif, and expect their family to grow soon.

When Stephen is not spending time outdoors, he enjoys tinkering in his workshop and building useful products out of trash and junk.

"Reliable communications are critical to safe operations in a variety of scenarios and emergencies," Stephen says. "Every field-going employee is my customer, and customer service is my first priority."

- Ann Bond



L-R (Top Row) Koya Maniss, Kelly Whitehair, Eboni Preston. (Bottom Row) Liberty Foster, Alex Tuckwin and Dominic Goseyun.

## Interns Appreciate USFS Experience

**DURANGO** - I had the privilege this summer of being part of the San Juan's first Greening Youth Foundation (GYF) internships. Liberty Foster and I worked out of the Public Lands Office, Alex Tuckwin and Dominic Goseyun were stationed on the Pagosa District, and Kelly Whitehair worked on the Dolores District. All of us were signed up officially as USFS volunteers.

We were given the opportunity to get out on in the field and experience the daily work of agency staffers. I spent several days with the Forest's hydrology crew and fish biologists helping with creek surveys on the Pagosa and Dolores districts.

Liberty worked with Forest Archaeologist Julie Coleman at Chimney Rock National Park.

Alex and Dominic backpacked and rode horseback in the Weminuche Wilderness to help monitor bighorn sheep on the Pagosa District.

Kelly Whitehair helped the Dolores District with backcountry inventories of native plants and noxious weeds.

GYF is a nonprofit foundation in Atlanta, Georgia, that partners with land-management agencies across the country to provide opportunities to young adults from diverse backgrounds who want to work in the conservation field. GYF depends on 12 employees to guide interns through the program; Eboni Preston oversaw our program and visited us over the summer to get a taste of our forest experiences.

We all had a great learning experience and would definitely recommend the program to our outdoorsy peers. I will be applying for another internship (possibly in Alaska) next summer. The hands-on experience really pulls you in and shows you what working for the USFS is truly like.

- Koya Maniss

## COLUMBINE RANGER DISTRICT

### Don't Trash the Wilderness



**DURANGO** - It's a dirty secret that backcountry USFS wilderness crews and volunteers must haul hundreds of pounds of trash out of the San Juan's Wilderness areas every year. The debris and refuse are left behind by backpackers, horse-back riders and hunters.

"We are continually packing out large amounts of trash and finding more on our way out," says Anne Dal Vera, Columbine RD Lead Wilderness Ranger. "It's really frustrating."

Just this summer, crews packed out more than 700 pounds of refuse left behind in the Weminuche Wilderness. In the newly designated Hermosa Creek Wilderness, another almost 700 pounds of trash were removed. It was carried out by horse, llama and on the backs of wilderness rangers.



Dollar Bill and Lois the Llama Lady pack out a folding table, yes a folding table, from the Weminuche Wilderness.

In addition to the commonly left behind unburied toilet paper, Anne says her crews find inflammable items, such as foil, burned batteries, beer cans left in fire rings.

They pick up propane canisters, tarps, folding chairs, broken tents and other camping gear.

Unused food and food wrappers are also left strewn around by campers who don't mind littering wilderness areas.

"I certainly don't want people to think we'll clean up after them," Anne says, "so I submit this information cautiously."

- Ann Bond



Seasonal wilderness ranger Jay Rezabek arrives at the trailhead with a load of trash collected from Moon Lake and the Flint and Pine River drainages in the Weminuche.



### From Spain to the San Juans

**DURANGO** - The Columbine RD is hosting Enrique Alvarez Garcia, of Madrid, as an intern for six months as he works on a degree equivalent to a Master's in Forest Engineering.

Here, Enrique (left) shows Ridgway High School student Lydia Leafstrand (right) how to measure stake rows at a reforestation unit on Middle Mountain. The lesson was part of the Mountain Studies Institute's Mountain Science Internship Program this summer.

- Gretchen Fitzgerald



## COLUMBINE RANGER DISTRICT



(L-R) Backcountry Horsemen volunteers Vern Jahne and Dan Wand install a Wilderness sign marking the boundary of the new Hermosa Wilderness on the lower end of the Clear Creek Trail.



(L-R) Four Corners Backcountry Horsemen Frank Amthor, Bob Croll, Bob Volger, Chris Smyth, Todd Rodas, Bill Gilbert, and Bob Struble celebrate the fruits of their labors this fall at the new horse corrals they constructed at the Pine River Trailhead.

## What would we do Without Volunteers?



The San Juan Mountains Association hosted the Leave No Trace Traveling Trainers this summer at the popular Ice Lakes Basin Trail. The trainers, wilderness interns and volunteers also helped the District celebrate the installation of a new interpretive kiosk at the trailhead.



(L-R) Lon Erwin, Gary Roberts, Christine Phillips, Lori Bowers, and Stephanie Fox with De Colores Civitan, part of Civitan International, continued their annual tradition this summer of sprucing up Andrews Lake.

Thank you to All of  
Our Partners!



## PAGOSA RANGER DISTRICT

### Brandon is Regional Interpreter of the Year



**PAGOSA SPRINGS** - The USFS Rocky Mountain Region has named Brandon Caley, Pagosa RD Visitor Information Services Assistant since 2013, as this year's Regional Interpreter of the Year.

Brandon has a passion for interpretive education and visitor information. He regularly partners with our local library, schools, and Audubon Society chapter to offer programs for youth. He also assists the Chimney Rock Interpretive Association at Chimney Rock National Monument.

Brandon's regional nomination means he will further compete for the National Gifford Pinchot Excellence in Interpretation and Conservation Education Award. The winner will be announced in November at the National Association for Interpretation Workshop in Corpus Christi, Texas.

Brandon holds a Bachelor's degree in Natural Resource Management from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, with an emphasis in environmental education, interpretation and recreation.

He is a Certified Interpretive Guide and a member of the National Association for Interpretation.

Brandon has also worked on the Tongass NF Ketchikan-Misty Fiords RD at the Southeast Alaska Discover Center, Alaska Marine Highway Interpretive Program and Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center. He started his federal career in 2006 on the Chugach NF at the Begich, Boggs Visitor Center.

- Kim Bristow

### VIPs Visit District

**PAGOSA SPRINGS** - The Pagosa RD hosted USFS Deputy Chief of State and Private Forestry James Hubbard and Associate Deputy Chief Victoria Christiansen this summer.

They met with representatives of the San Juan, Rio Grande and Carson national forests, and USFS Rocky Mountain and Southwest regions.

Field trips focused on efforts to build resilient forests under the agency's National Cohesive Strategy, which prioritizes fuels reduction efforts that cross state, private, tribal and federal boundaries.

Local stops included JR Ford's Forest Health Company and Chimney Rock National Monument. The group also learned about a Good Neighbor fuels-reduction project planned for the Vega La Juana area and the Southwest Conservation Corps' Green Veterans Program.

Attending were several local partners, including the Pagosa Lakes Property Owners Association, Pagosa Trails Council, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Colorado State Forest Service, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, FireWise, Mountain Studies Institute, and San Juan Headwaters Partnership. New Mexico partners included The Nature Conservancy and Chama Peak Land Alliance.

For more information on Pagosa's effort to reach across jurisdictions to make forests healthier and communities safer, please watch this exciting new video produced by Liam Godmintz, an intern on the Pagosa District this summer: <https://vimeo.com/178912446>



- Ann Bond

## PAGOSA RANGER DISTRICT

### Team Effort for Trail Triage

**PAGOSA SPRINGS** - Thanks to local partners and the Rocky Mountain Specialty Pack String, the Pagosa RD was able this summer to repair a section of the Williams Creek Trail.

The problem section had no natural drainage, so a 200-foot elevated turnpike was needed to make passage safe for stock travel and prevent further resource damage. The challenge was working without the aid of mechanized and motorized equipment or transportation in the Weminuche Wilderness.

Pagosa District Wilderness Program Lead Ros Wu packed in tools and supplies, and the district trail crew felled trees by hand to build the turnpike's structure, and also unloaded and spread gravel.

The big job of moving 15 tons of gravel up the trail was handled by the Specialty Pack Team mules, a regional resource made available to national forests for heavy-duty wilderness work. The Backcountry Horsemen covered costs for gravel, food and campsites through a \$1,500 grant from the National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance, then matched that with \$1,500 of their own money. The nonprofit group also set up the gravel loading station and loaded gravel themselves.

"There was no way we could have done it without our partners," said Tyler Albers, Pagosa RD Trail Crew Boss. "Volunteers did 75 percent of the work; we just did our normal job of trail maintenance and provided some technical and logistical support."

- Ann Bond



## DOLORES PUBLIC LANDS OFFICE

### New Trail Celebrated

**DOLORES** - The Dolores community came together in late September to celebrate the grand opening of the new seven-mile, non-motorized McPhee Overlook Trail connecting House Creek Campground with the Town of Dolores.

Trail construction began in April with local contractors working on the section near town. Southwest Conservation Corps (SCC) crews began hand work in May on the middle section.

By July, Trails Unlimited, a USFS trail construction specialty group, were working with a mini excavator and trail dozer, and conducting blasting near the House Creek end. SCC crews will complete minor modifications this fall and spring.

The partnership effort was made possible through several grants, including \$105,000 from the State of Colorado Trails Program, \$65,000 from 21<sup>st</sup> Century Funds, and \$50,000 from the National Forest Foundation, plus over \$75,000 of partner cash match and in-kind funding.

The trail is open to non-motorized uses, including hiking, biking, and horseback riding. The trail will be closed annually from December 1 to April 15 to protect big-game winter habitat.

- Tom Rice



(L-R) Dolores RD Wilderness and Trails Program Supervisor Chris Bouton helps Dolores Mayor Santiago Lopez celebrate the McPhee Overlook ribbon cutting.



## DOLORES PUBLIC LANDS OFFICE



### Darren is New VIS

**DOLORES** - Darren Uptain is the new Dolores RD Visitor Information Assistant offering public information on the San Juan NF and Tres Rios BLM. He'll also be selling permits and helping keep residents and visitors notified of projects and issues.

A Dolores native, Darren graduated from Dolores High School in 2013 and has restored classic cars, including his grandfather's 1952 Ford truck and 1911 Ford Model T.

"My family came here in the late 1900s, and I've learned many historical things about this area and how it has developed over the years," he says.

Darren started at the Dolores front desk as a volunteer in 2014, while also donating 1,500 volunteer hours on field assignments. In May, he became a seasonal employee on the Dolores RD as a Recreation Aid Assistant focusing on trail maintenance.

Darren enjoys hiking, fishing, gardening, and taking care of the family farm. "There's nothing like growing your own food and knowing where it comes from," he says.

Darren says he is very glad to be part of the San Juan NF and looks forward to continuing to help the public enjoy public lands.

"The best part of my day is when people leave the office satisfied with a big smile on their face," he says.

- Ann Bond

### Elaine Retires

**DOLORES** - Elaine Sherman will retire this fall from the San Juan NF after more than 14 years as Dolores RD Archaeologist. Prior to that, Elaine was District Archaeologist on the Angelina NF in Texas for seven years, where she also served details on forests in Mississippi, Alabama, and North Carolina. Before then, she worked on the Lassen NF Eagle Lake RD for five years.

In 1997 Elaine received the Texas Historical Commission's Award of Excellence in Archaeological Preservation for her work. She holds a Bachelor's in Anthropology from Ripon College in Wisconsin and a Master's in Anthropology from the University of Nevada, Reno.

Retirement plans are to stay in Cortez and spend time with her mother, Velma; brother, Duane; and three cats. She also plans to visit other family in California and the Pacific Northwest. Elaine looks forward to craftwork, drawing and watercolor, genealogy, and music.

During her tenure on the San Juan NF, Elaine is most proud of helping with the successful prosecution of an archaeological looting case, rehabilitation of the Glade Guard Station, and construction of the new Dolores Office.

"I'm also proud of consistently beating Patrick McCoy in the district's annual Halloween Cubical Decorating Contest, and all the good people I've had the privilege to work with over the years," she says.

- Ann Bond

